



## Ohio Psychological Association: Official Statement

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### **OPA Diversity Statement – Response to Recent Remarks by President Trump**

*February 27, 2018*

*Written by: Ohio Psychological Association Board of Directors and Diversity Committee*

In 1967 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr addressed psychologists at the American Psychological Association (APA) annual convention in Washington, DC. It was during this speech that he encouraged psychologists to educate the public and advocate to Congress about the impact of discrimination and racism on the prevalence of mental health problems in people of color. 51 Years later, these efforts continue to be imperative and arguably, are an ethical responsibility of psychologists to promote and practice on a daily basis.

The Ohio Psychological Association (OPA) takes pride in its stance for justice and equality for all people. Many members of OPA were greatly saddened by the racist remarks and sentiments expressed by The White House over the past year, particularly in the past weeks, regarding our brothers and sisters from other countries that are predominantly comprised of people of color. This re-emergence of overt racism observed in our current government is of great concern to the body of OPA.

Research tells us that mental health of people of color can be greatly impacted by prolonged, chronic exposure to discrimination and racism. Prevalence of depression, anxiety and trauma is often observed as a result of discriminatory experiences. The apparent institutional dissociation practiced by our current government officials directly enables and encourages racist practices at local levels. This trend directly impacts the mental health of the public on individual and community levels.

Members of OPA treat individuals and families on a daily basis who are struggling with various symptoms as a direct result of feeling unsafe, threatened, bullied, and fearful due to racist values currently being tolerated by some of our National leaders. These values perpetuate and worsen observed patterns of healthcare and educational disparities leading to increased mental health symptoms, behavioral problems in children and overrepresentation of people of color in the criminal justice system.

OPA has a solid history of being involved in advocacy at local and federal levels. As Dr. King encouraged APA, we must continue to advocate for the needs of people of color and take an explicit stance against racist ideals that corrupt the moral compass and progression of this country. OPA has consistently advocated for the fair treatment of underrepresented groups and taken a firm stand against any notion of discrimination and racism.

OPA will continue to promote collaboration, advocacy, and fairness for our members and communities in which we live and serve. As psychologists, our ethical code holds us to a high standard of practice,

which includes justice and responsibility for fair treatment of all people. OPA strongly encourages its members to write letters and make phone calls to our leaders to advocate for issues such as these and we encourage the public to do the same.

Resources:

Not sure who your legislators are, click here to find out. <https://whoismyrepresentative.com/>

Full MLK Jr Speech: <http://www.apa.org/monitor/features/king-challenge.aspx>

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Hoggard, L. S., Byrd, C.M., and Sellers, R.M. (2015). The lagged effects of racial discrimination on depressive symptomology and interactions with racial identity. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*; 62. p.216-225.